



Lake Afton Public Observatory

FOR: Immediate Release

FROM: Lake Afton Public Observatory
WSU Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education
Robert Henry, 316.978.3991 or Greg Novacek, 316.978.3854

DATE: January 3, 2012

RE: Lake Afton Public Observatory – New programs for winter, 2012.

The Women of Astronomy and Traveling from the Moon to the Stars

This winter, in January, and February, on Moonless evenings when the sky is at its darkest, the Lake Afton Public Observatory will present *“Women in Astronomy”*. Astronomers are typically portrayed as men. However, women have been making important, direct contributions to astronomy for centuries. Today, a significant number of astronomers are women. Hear about the histories and achievements of selected women astronomers while viewing some of the many celestial objects they studied. During this program we will observe Jupiter, a giant blue star, a supernova remnant, a nebula and a spiral galaxy. *“Women in Astronomy”* will be presented on the evenings of January 13-14, and 20-21; and February 10-11 and 17-18.

If you come out to the Observatory on an evening in January or February when the Moon is visible in the sky, you will be treated to the program, *“From the Moon to the Stars”*. Visitors will get to use the Observatory's big telescope to take a visual journey to the stars. It all starts with observations of the craters and smooth plains of our nearest neighbor, the Moon. The next stop will be the planet Venus (in February) and then out to Jupiter, the biggest planet in our solar system. The journey will end with a view of a distant supergiant star. *“From the Moon to the Stars”* will be presented on the evenings of January 6-7 and 27-28; and February 3-4 and 24-25.

The Observatory also has numerous exhibits designed to complement our telescope programs. One such exhibit explains the stages that different types of stars go through during their lifetimes; another shows the many interesting features found on Venus; and yet another recaps the Galileo mission to Jupiter. We will also feature eight famous women astronomers and the work for which they are recognized. Some of our other exhibits let you make a telescope, explore the properties of light, touch a rock from space, use a computer to go on a scavenger hunt through the solar system or land a spacecraft on the moon, or you can use our small telescopes and binoculars outside to find objects in the sky on your own.

Office:
1845 Fairmount
Wichita, KS 67260-0032
(316) 978-3191

Program Information:
(316) WSU-STAR
Internet:
<http://webs.wichita.edu/lapo>

Observatory:
20 mi. SW of downtown Wichita
on MacArthur Rd. at 247th St. W.
(316) 794-8995

The Observatory also features one photography program each month where anyone with a 35mm single-lens reflex camera (that's a camera with a removable lens) can take celestial photographs using the Observatory's 16" telescope as a giant telephoto lens. On Saturday, January 21st, beginning at 6:00 p.m. we will be photographing Venus. Then, on Saturday, February 25th at 10:00 p.m. our astrophotography program will focus on Mars. Please note that for photographing relatively bright planetary objects like Venus and Mars, ISO 400 or 800 color film and a cable release are recommended. Please note that automatic 35mm cameras without a manual override cannot be used to take astronomical photos.

If you do not have a 35mm SLR camera with manual override, bring a USB flash drive instead and we will show you how to use the Observatory's digital SLR camera to take your pictures. After you have taken your pictures, we will transfer them to your flash drive for you to take home, process and print.

Opening Times and Admission

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings. Through the end of February, our hours are from 7:30-10:00 p.m. Admission to the Observatory is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 6-12; children under 6 are admitted free. We also have a special family rate where 2 adults and their immediate children or grandchildren get in for just \$15.00. Current program information is available from our information line at WSU-STAR (978-7827) or on our website at <http://webs.wichita.edu/lapo>.

Location

The observatory is located about 20 miles southwest of downtown Wichita on MacArthur Road at 247th Street West in Lake Afton County Park. It is immediately north of the lake, just off MacArthur Road. Lake Afton can be reached by any of the following routes: west from Wichita on U.S. 54 to the Lake Afton sign at Viola Road three miles past Goddard, then three miles south and one mile east; or southwest on K-42, 7 miles to Schulte and nine miles west on MacArthur.

Events Taking Place in the Sky

Would you like to know when full moon will occur? Have you ever pondered the name of the bright star you saw near the moon? Is there a meteor shower this month? To discover the answers to these questions or if you just want to know what events are taking place in the sky during the current month call the Observatory's Program and Sky Information line at WSU-STAR (978-7827).

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is operated by the Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education, a part of the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Science at Wichita State University.

Lake Afton Public Observatory Public Program Schedule January 2 – February 29, 2012

Program	January	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>From the Moon to the Stars</i>	7:30-10:00 p.m.	January 6-7, 27-28
<i>Women in Astronomy</i>	7:30-10:00 p.m.	January 13-14, 20-21
Photography: Venus	6:00 p.m.	Saturday, January 21

Program	February	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>From the Moon to the Stars</i>	7:30-10:00 p.m.	February 3-4, 24-25
<i>Women in Astronomy</i>	7:30-10:00 p.m.	February 10-11, 17-18
Photography: Mars	10:00 p.m.	Saturday, February 25

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